



Rufus Grizen

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Patricia V. Cascos, at 39, is one of 29 women working as government hydrologists. "I was always one of those kids who wanted to know how and why something happened," she says. "In high school I was fascinated by Jacques Cousteau, who explored the depths of the seas with his mini-sub."

Cascos was graduated from San Francisco State University with a bachelor's degree in marine biology, and became a hydrologist two years later. (An oceanographer studies salt water resources while a hydrologist studies fresh water.)

Cascos evaluates the water of dozens of rivers to determine whether it will pass standards set by the government.

"When the amount of bacteria increases, it's usually a result of sewage contaminants, which can kill fish and

ruin recreational and drinking water," explains Cascos.

When Cascos is not in the lab, she can be seen driving a van with a small power boat in tow. She carries to each testing site equipment for taking mud samples.

Cascos takes her work very seriously: "I feel I'm doing something positive and worthwhile not only for humanity, but for me. I specialize in estuaries where rivers enter the ocean. A lot of dynamic things happen here because these areas are sometimes used as a dumping ground for sewage. That's why there's cause for great concern in light of the effects on health," says Cascos.

Even though she often puts in 18-hour days and is on call for testing whenever it storms heavily, Cascos encourages women to go into this rewarding field. Her salary is \$22,000 per year.

Like many New Women, Cascos manages to juggle home and career successfully. She is married to a U.S.G.S. oceanographer; their first child was born in July.

— Margo Walker Williams

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